

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 7138

LIMDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, PE

SUBJ: DISSENSION WITHIN THE ARMY

REF: LIMA 6317

SUMMARY. EMBASSY HAS BEEN TOLD BY USUALLY WELL-INFORMED SOURCE THAT THE ARMY IS FACING A SERIOUS PROBLEM OF DISSENSION CONCENTRATED AT THE MAJOR AND CAPTAIN LEVEL. SOURCE ALLEGED THAT 30 ARMY OFFICERS HAD BEEN ARRESTED FOR THEIR ACTIVITIES AND THAT AS MANY AS 500 MID-LEVEL OFFICERS HAVE ISSUED A MANIFESTO CALLING FOR INTER ALIA THE RESIGNATION OF MORALES BERMUDEZ AND ALL FIVE ARMY REGIONAL COMMANDERS. DISSIDENTS PURPORTEDLY CLAIM THAT "ARMY" SHOULD HAVE BEEN CONSULTED ON RECENT DECISION TO REMOVE PRIME MINISTER FERNANDEZ MALDONADO AS WELL AS ON POLICY CHANGES. END SUMMARY.

1. ON AUGUST 4 GENERAL IBANEZ O'BRIEN, MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND TOURISM, COMMENTED TO REPORTERS THAT "THE ARMED FORCES IN UNDERTAKING THE REVOLUTION REMAIN FULLY COGNIZANT OF THE (POLITICAL) COST TO THE MILITARY INSTITUTION THE COMMITMENT (TO GOVERN) SIGNIFIES". IBANEZ WENT ON TO SAY THAT "THERE ARE POLITICAL GROUPS OF DIFFERENT TENDENCIES WHICH UNDERSTANDING THE ABOVE-MENTIONED ARE ATTEMPTING TO DESTROY EXISTING UNITY IN THE ARMED FORCES AND POLICE". "THESE ATTEMPTS TO UNDERMINE

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UNITY WILL BREAK AGAINST AN INDESTRUCTIBLE WALL."

2. IBANEZ' STATEMENT IS SOMEWHAT CURIOUS AT A TIME WHEN THERE HAS BEEN NO HINT IN GOP CONTROLLED PRESS OF ANY FURTHER DISENSION WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES OR BETWEEN THE MILITARY AND POLICE. THE DECLARATION, WHICH WILL CERTAINLY REMAIN FREE OF PRESS INTERPRETATION OR COMMENT, ALMOST APPEARS TO BE INTENDED TO REASSURE THE MILITARY THEMSELVES THAT THEY ARE UNIFIED.

3. THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE, HOWEVER, THAT WHATEVER THE COHESION AMONG GENERAL OFFICERS, DISSENSION AT THE MAJOR AND CAPTAIN LEVEL TROUBLES THE MILGOV. AN ARMY CAPTAIN WHO IS AN ADVISER IN THE OFFICE OF PRIME MINISTER ARBULU TOLD EMBOFF AUGUST 5 THAT WIDESPREAD DISCONTENT OVER RECENT POLITICAL CHANGES HAS MANIFESTED ITSELF AMONG ARMY MAJORS AND CAPTAINS WHO HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED BY EIGHT YEARS OF REVOLUTIONARY RHETORIC. SOURCE CLAIMED THAT 30 MID-LEVEL OFFICERS HAD BEEN ARRESTED FOR SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITY INCLUDING AN ATTEMPT TO DISTRIBUTE ARMS IN LIMA SLUM AREAS. SAME GROUP OF OFFICERS WERE, ACCORDING TO SOURCE, IN CONTACT WITH LEFTIST LABOR GROUPS WITH PURPOSE OF ORGANIZING LABOR UNREST.

4. MORE DISTURBING TO GOP THAN ABOVE SITUATION, ACCORDING TO PRIME MINISTER'S ADVISER, HAS BEEN A MANIFESTO PREPARED IN LATE JULY AND ADHERED TO BY CIRCA 500 ARMY OFFICERS (PRIMARILY MAJORS AND CAPTAINS) ALLEGEDLY DEMANDING THE RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT MORALES BERMUDEZ AND ALL FIVE REGIONAL COMMANDERS FOR REFUSING TO CONSULT WITH THE ARMY ON DECISION TO RETIRE PRIME MINISTER FERNANDEZ MALDONADO AND TO SHIFT REVOLUTIONARY PRIORITIES. DISSENTING OFFICERS ARE SAID TO BE CONCENTRATED IN THE ARMORED AND AIRBORNE DIVISIONS. MANIFESTO PURPORTEDLY CONTAINS "LAUNDRY LIST" OF WHAT SOURCE CALLED IMPOSSIBLE DEMANDS STARTING WITH THE OUSTER OF MORALES BERMUDEZ AND REPLACEMENT OF CIVILIAN FONMIN DE LA PUENTE WITH AN ARMY OFFICER AND INCLUDING RECISION OF RECENT DECISION ON RETURN OF FISHING BOATS TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR AS WELL AS THE MAINTENANCE OF REVOLUTIONARY GUARANTEES TO LABOR.

5. SOURCE CITED ANOTHER ISOLATED INCIDENT WHICH HE CLAIMED WAS SYMPTOMATIC OF DISSENSION. GENERAL ALCIBIADES SAENZ, COMMANDER OF THE ARMORED DIVISION, ALLEGEDLY RECEIVED A FLORAL CONFIDENTIAL

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DEATH CROSS WITH AN ATTACHED NOTE READING "FROM THE OFFICERS OF YOUR DIVISION".

6. SOURCE AFFIRMED THAT MILGOV EXTREMELY CONCERNED BECAUSE WIDESPREAD PROTEST CANNOT BE CONTROLLED THROUGH DISCIPLINARY ACTION ALONE. HE CLAIMED THAT WAR MINISTER ARBULU AT THIS STAGE PLANNED TO "DIALOGUE" WITH THE DISSIDENTS. THE 30 PRISONERS MIGHT BE RELEASED AS A GESTURE OF GOOD FAITH.

DISSIDENT GROUP IS MAKING THE CASE THAT CONSERVATIVE OFFICERS INVOLVED IN THE JULY 9 BOBBIO INCIDENT (REFTEL) WERE NEVER ARRESTED THUS DEMONSTRATING UNEQUAL TREATMENT FOR LEFT AND RIGHT. SALARY INCREASE FOR JUNIOR AND MID-LEVEL OFFICERS MIGHT ALSO BE OFFERED IN HOPES OF DEFUSING DISCONTENT. SOURCE LEFT OPEN POSSIBILITY THAT GOP MIGHT MODIFY CERTAIN POLICIES IN AN EFFORT TO REASSURE PROTESTORS THAT THE REVOLUTION CONTINUES.

7. GOP LEADERS ARE WORRIED, CLAIMED PRIME MINISTER'S ADVISER, THAT LEFTIST POLITICAL GROUPS, IF THEY BECOME FULLY AWARE OF THE EXTENT OF DISCONTENT OF THE ARMY, WILL STEP UP EFFORTS TO FOMENT POLITICAL UNREST. IN THIS REGARD HE ALLEGED THAT USUALLY FACTIONALIZED MARXIST GROUPS ARE NOT (IN THE WAKE OF GOP POLITICAL CHANGES) COORDINATING EFFORTS TO ORGANIZE A GENERAL STRIKE. GOP IS ATTEMPTING TO PREVENT COORDINATION THROUGH CONTROL OF CIVILIAN MOVEMENTS, ESPECIALLY FROM LIMA OUT TO THE PROVINCES, AND A MORE RIGOROUS SAFE-CONDUCT PASS SYSTEM HAS BEEN INSTITUTED.

8. COMMENT: AN EMBASSY HAS POINTED OUT PREVIOUSLY, SOURCE OF ABOVE INFORMATION IS HIMSELF A YOUNG MILITARY OFFICER WHO WORKED WITH AND WAS CONSIDERED CLOSE TO FORMER PRIME MINISTER FERNANDEZ MALDONADO. HIS PERCEPTIONS MAY BE INFLUENCED BY THAT RELATIONSHIP AND HIS OWN POLITICAL CONVICTIONS. HE MAY, THEREFORE, BE EXAGGERATING DISCONTENT IN THE ARMY STEMMING FROM REMOVAL OF FERNANDEZ AMADONADO AND SUBSEQUENT POLITICAL CHANGES. HOWEVER, EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED INFORMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES CONCERNING THE ARREST OF PERHAPS 30 OR MORE ARMY OFFICERS WHICH TENDS TO CORROBORATE EVIDENCE OF DISSENT. THERE IS CERTAINLY SMOKE WITHIN THE ARMY BUT EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE TO PREVENT FIRE.

SMITH

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